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UVI Basketball Programs Begin Practice In Preparation For Season; Will Host Tournament in November with Fully Vaccinated Crowd

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The University of the Virgin Islands Men's and Women's Basketball Team began practice on Friday in preparation for their respective upcoming seasons' and local fans first chance to see the University action live will be November 3, when UVI's first HBCU Classic tips off at the Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas.

The seasons' will begin with a road trip to South Carolina where both teams will face off against Morris College on Oct. 29 and Oct. 30 before the Bucs return to the Virgin Islands and host thier first HBCU Classic from November 3-6.

In the HBCU classic UVI will match up against Arkansas Baptist College, Warner University, Huston-Tillotson University and Wilberforce University.

The UVI Men's team will play Wilberforce on Nov. 3, Warner on Nov. 4 and Huston-Tillotson on Nov.5 will all three games tipping off at 8:30 p.m.

The UVI women's team will play Arkansas Baptist on Nov. 3 at 6:00 p.m., Wilberforce on Nov. 4 at 6:30 p.m. and Huston-Tillotson on Nov. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

Lynika Niki Collins, Women's Head Basketball Coach, explained to the Consortium that she feels the team is young but has some players from higher levels that will help teach the younger players and hopes the younger players are "just to be open to learning things, I hope they will be sponges and take on everything I'm teaching them as a coach and that they are learning from their teammates that have the experience."

Ms Collins said "we do need the support of the community we would like everyone to come out and see what we offer down here at UVI and hope that you can become a long lasting fan and just grow with us as we start over from the ground up with this program.

Alfonzo Duncan, Mens Basketball coach, spoke of the expectations for his team and said "the team for this season is a very inexperienced, young team, that will work hard look to put out a really, really good product with the players that we currently have."

He added that "They are young, there anxious, they are determined, they are hardworking and they are learning a completely new system... we are going to look to grow together as a unit and play hard, play smart and look to win some games this year."

When Mr. Duncan was asked about what he would like to see from fans he said "I want a lot of enthusiasm, lot of energy from the fans, I want them to feel as they are a part of what we are doing out there."

"I'm really, really excited about playing here in November, I think by the time we actually play here in November it will have been about 1,000 days that has passed since there was last a home game here."

There will be two additional games a day.

On Nov 3, there will be a women's game between Wilberforce and Huston-Tillotson at 2 p.m. and a Men's game between Huston-Tillotson and Warner at 4:30 p.m.

On Nov 4, Arkansas Baptist and Huston-Tillotson women's teams will play at 2 p.m and Huston-Tillotson and Wilberforce Men's team will play at 4:30 p.m.

On Friday Nov 5, Warner and Wilberforce will play a Men's game at 2 p.m. and Arkansas Baptist and Wilberforce will play a Women's game at 4:30 p.m.

UVI Athletic Director Jerel Drew spoke about the other teams UVI will play during the HBCU Classic and said "you have a long history of teams coming down who have won conference championships, some who played in the tournament as far as nationally, so your going to get different styles, different calibers of players."

He added his expectation for the UVI teams "We are going to play great ball here, we are going to be aggressive, we are going to be out on that court and we are going to run and own our tournament and also own our gym. Look for UVI to come in and we are going to ball very hard on the Womens side and Mens side as well."

On Wednesday night UVI will induct a new hall of fame class in-between the UVI Women's and Mens Game.

Fans are encouraged to wear royal blue on Wednesday night as the University will try and "Blue Out" the Sports and Fitness center.

"We want anybody as far as the fans, anybody coming, wear your royal blue, it's a blue out, support your team" Mr. Drew explained

Fans will have two ticket options. A tournament pass, which includes general admission for all three days, can be purchased for \$30 or daily passes which can be purchased for \$15 per for general admission for a specific day of the event.

Daily passes are \$5 for faculty/staff and local high school students.

All ticket options can be purchased [here](#).

UVI Students with school ID and Children under 5 can attend the event for free.

Tickets were made available online through the University's partnership with Hometown Ticketing.

UVI Athletic Director Jerel Drew emphasized the importance of creating a safe environment and getting approval from the Department of Health to host the event when speaking to the Consortium on Friday.

"We took measures everywhere possible to make it a safe environment, safe event...just the big consensus of making sure you got a safe event, you got a fun event but at the same time something that is going to make everybody feel as if they are going to be in a great environment where they still feel a sense of normalcy" the athletic director said.

The University's Indoor Spector Policy is as follows:

1. Spectators will not be allowed inside the Sports & Fitness Center until an hour before the scheduled event.
2. Immediately upon entry into the Sports & Fitness Center, spectators must submit to temperature screening via one of the two Zortemp 1000 Body Temperature Infrared Scanner Kiosks.
3. Every section inside the arena has sanitization stations that feature wipes, hand sanitizer, and a garbage bin. Please locate these stations and use them before you sit down and after you get up.
4. Please do not leave any trash in the bleachers, use the garbage bins to dispose of your waste.
5. Everyone must wear masks (cover the nose and mouth) and stay socially distant (a minimum of six feet) from other spectators, or they will be asked to leave.
6. No outside food or drinks. The concession (Buccaneers Cafe) stand will be fully operational. The only exception to always wearing your mask is when you are actively eating or drinking.
7. If a spectator is under the age of 12, that spectator must sit with the legal guardian at all times.
8. Spectators may not interact with team members or coaching staff members before or after the contest. When the contest is over, spectators must immediately exit the venue. Spectators must also stay away from locker room areas before and after the contest.
9. All tickets must be purchased online through the university's partnership with Hometown Ticketing. Tickets are redeemed by the touch-less process of scanning your barcode. Students of UVI must show their current student identification cards.
10. Fans who leave the arena will not be permitted to re-enter once the second half has begun.
11. All events inside the Sports & Fitness Center require tickets.
12. No pets allowed inside the arena, with the exception of service dogs.
13. No guns allowed on campus, which includes the arena.

For the University of the Virgin Islands HBCU Basketball Classic, fans can submit proof of vaccination to HBCUAthleticsvacs@uvi.edu.

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